

With Disabilities Education Act. And yet, the 1994 NAEP Reading Report Card points out that 40 percent of children in fourth grade are reading below the basic level. This means they have only partially mastered the prerequisite knowledge and skills which are fundamental for proficient work at their grade level.

President Clinton, and I commend him for his interest in improving reading skills in our Nation's children, has proposed that we address this problem primarily through the use of volunteers to help students experiencing reading difficulties. However, hearings before my Committee on Education and the Workforce have pointed out that an even more fundamental change is necessary if we are to teach children to read. The fact is, we first have to teach teachers how to teach reading based on reliable, replicable research on how children learn to read.

Dr. Reid Lyon, Chief of the Child Development and Behavior Branch at the National Institutes of Health, testified before the committee that fewer than 10 percent of our Nation's teachers have an adequate understanding of how reading develops or how to provide reading instruction to struggling readers.

Rather than focusing on volunteers, we need to focus our attention on those individuals who have the primary responsibility for teaching our children to read.

Today I am introducing a bill which I believe will go a long way toward addressing the illiteracy problems in our country. This legislation, the Reading Excellence Act, provides grants to States to provide funding to title 1 schools in school improvement to teach teachers how to teach reading and to provide for a range of other activities to help prevent the development of reading difficulties among children in elementary school.

Among other activities, the bill requires schools to provide transition programs for children who are not ready to move from kindergarten to first grade, family literacy activities for parents who have low levels of literacy to help them become their child's first and most important teacher, and additional assistance before and after school, on weekends, during non-instructional periods during the school day and during the summer to children experiencing reading difficulties.

The bill also requires States to fund tutorial assistance grants. These grants would go to title 1 schools in enterprise and empowerment zones and would be used to provide grants to parents to seek additional reading assistance for their children from a list of providers developed by the local educational agency.

The Reading Excellence Act also calls for the board dissemination of information on reliable, replicable research on reading to Federal education programs with a strong reading component so all teachers have the knowledge they need to teach children how to read.

Finally, this bill makes important changes to the Even Start Family Literacy Act and the College Work Study Act to allow them to work with children and families to improve the reading ability of our Nation's children.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good bill which will go a long way toward insuring that the children in our Nation will learn to read as soon as possible once they enter school. It is my sincere hope that this bill can receive bipartisan support and I have been working closely with the Clinton administration and Democrats who

serve on my committee to achieve that goal. While we are not there yet, it is my desire to continue to work with them to develop a bill that both Republicans and Democrats can support and that will truly help all children to read no later than the third grade.

INTRODUCTION OF THE EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 1997

HON. BOB ETHERIDGE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 6, 1997

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to announce an important initiative for rural America. Recently, rural areas have been faced with rising health care costs, and providing medical services has become a financial burden on local government. As a result, rescue and EMS squads have had to forgo needed improvements, construction, and equipment. When a loved one requires emergency services, ambulances must roll, equipment must work, and facilities must be in place. These organizations often make the difference between life and death in an emergency. We cannot risk one life because of a lack of sufficient funds for these organizations.

Today, I am introducing legislation that will seek to correct this problem. The Emergency Medical Services Enhancement [EMS] Act will allow emergency organizations to issue tax-exempt bonds to raise funds for the purchase of equipment and for the construction and improvement of facilities. Tax-exempt bonds are used to build schools, bridges, and other public facilities. Volunteer fire departments have issued these bonds to purchase equipment and facilities. It is only right that we give similar consideration to those volunteer organizations that provide life saving emergency services to our citizens.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation will have an immediate impact on volunteer emergency organizations in rural areas across this country. In Harnett County, NC, my home county, the town of Dunn is building a new EMS facility as a result of damage to the previous station from Hurricane Fran last year. The Dunn EMS would have saved half a million dollars if it could have issued tax-exempt bonds. In Franklin County, the Franklinton EMS has been colocated with the fire department since its headquarters were destroyed by Fran last year. This bill will help them rebuild and provide the quality services the people of Franklin County deserve. This bill will save lives in rural counties throughout the country.

Mr. Speaker, this bill builds on the work of my friend and a former Member of this body, Martin Lancaster. He laid the foundation for this effort by introducing this bill when he was in the House a few years ago. I am pleased to have the opportunity to introduce this bill that will fulfill a critical need in our rural communities.

INTRODUCTION OF THE CHILD SUPPORT ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 1997

HON. GREG GANSKE

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 7, 1997

Mr. GANSKE. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the Child Support Enhancement Act of 1997 which will help ensure that deadbeat parents take personal responsibility for their children.

It takes two people to bring a child into the world and it takes two people to raise a child in this world. Unfortunately, in too many cases, one parent believes that their responsibility ends when the baby is born.

Statistics estimate that by 1994, there were approximately 11.4 million families with minor children in this country that were single-parent households. While single-parent families made up roughly 13 percent of American families in 1970, this number escalated to 31 percent of all families in 1994.

This harsh reality means that the success of our Nation's child support enforcement efforts is important to an even greater number of children growing up in this country in single-parent homes.

As I have mentioned before, while we can't legislate and force parents to read to their children, attend Little League baseball games or show up at birthday parties, we can help make sure there is food in children's mouths and clothes on their backs by encouraging financial responsibility. This financial responsibility must include both parents. Child support is not merely a legal duty; it is a moral duty.

This is why I strongly supported the initiatives contained in the welfare bill that passed into law during the 104th Congress. The new law improves child support collection procedures, enhances enforcement of child support orders across State lines, and helps insure that deadbeat parents take personal responsibility for their children.

As Members of Congress we must oversee the implementation of the new law to ensure it is achieving its intended purpose. In the meantime, we must continue efforts to strengthen our child support enforcement efforts.

The importance of these initiatives can clearly be seen when one considers that in fiscal year 1995, the child support enforcement program collected child support payments for less than 20 percent of its caseload.

That is why I am introducing the Child Support Enforcement Act of 1997. This bill authorizes the seizure or interception of judgments or settlements to private individuals in suits brought against the Federal Government. The legislation applies to settlements or judgments in both administrative actions and claims in a court of law.

Currently, State child support enforcement officials and others working on behalf of custodial parents can seize or intercept moneys in suits against private individuals and State governments, but only in very narrow circumstances can they do this when Uncle Sam is involved.

If a deadbeat parent is going to receive money from the Federal Government, this legislation will help to ensure that the children get their share.